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SHORTAGES AT LOCAL SOVIET PHARMACIES

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In Pogrebishchenskiy Rayon of Vinnitsa Oblast there are 22 pharmaceutical stations, three village pharmacies, and one rayon pharmacy. The pharmacists are trying to fulfill the needs of the rayon population and hospitals but are faced with many serious obstacles.

In every rayon hospital there is a surgical department for which the pharmacies prepare sterile solutions of novocain, sodium chloride, etc. Between 5 and 6 liters of solutions are used during a day of surgical operations and there are, at our particular hospital, 15 such days per month. Despite the necessity of preparing solutions, the pharmacies are still not equipped even with flame-heated apparatus for making twice-distilled water and even if the apparatus suggested by the USSR Pharmacopoeia were used the required amount of water could not be obtained.

We also need specially constructed autoclaves for sterilizing large quantities of injection solutions. The autoclaves manufactured by the medical industry for the disinfection of dressing materials are unwieldy and ill-adapted to the sterilization of solutions. The lack of such an autoclave leads to violations of the elementary principles of pharmaceutical preparation, and to improvisation. Sterilization with steam in Koch apparatuses is unsatisfactory. In some village pharmacies solutions are sterilized by steam in ordinary kettles.

The rayon health division and the physicians of the rayon and district hospitals demand that the pharmacy provide the village medical installations and the populace with a regular and continuous supply of medicaments, medical instruments, and dressing materials. However, only very small quantities of effective drugs such as streptomycin, synthomycin, levomycetin, albomycin, etc., are sent to the village pharmacies and stations. The instrument and apparatus situation is the same. The sales distribution plan of the wholesale-retail store of the Vinnitsa Pharmaceutical Administration for some reason does not include the issuance of goods to the pharmacies. In fact the store provides the pharmacies only with instruments and apparatuses of which there is a surplus. Hygroscopic cotton is in very short supply. There is only enough for the therapeutic institutions.

The problem of supplying pharmaceutical stations is very critical. These stations are attached to the nearest village pharmacy, which, according to the territorial plan, should supply them with medicaments and oversee their activities. The personnel of village pharmacies usually consists of one man who, without the necessary accessory materials, is required to package and maintain a supply of needed pharmaceuticals. As a result many medicinal preparations remain unpackaged. The manager of the station must do this work himself, and usually does it by rule of thumb.

The centralized preparation system for stable medicines was poorly planned. The laboratory for packaging galenicals of the Vinnitsa Pharmaceutical Administration, for example, packages only about ten preparations, and only five or six of these reach the villages. This laboratory does not package tincture of iodine at all.

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Maximum attention should be devoted to supplying pharmaceutical stations. The Ministry of Health USSR should issue a new catalogue of the medical merchandise which is specially designated for use by pharmaceutical stations of category II. It is a well known fact that the number of such stations is to be increased considerably within the next few years.

Dressing material and home nursing equipment should be included in the catalogue. Two or three of the more effective medicaments from every group of pharmacological preparations having a certain type of therapeutic activity should be made available to the pharmaceutical stations, and these preparations should be packaged at the factory in such a way that compounded medicines will not deteriorate when stored.

Some medicinal preparations are poorly manufactured at the chemicopharmaceutical factories in tablet form and arrive at the pharmacies crumbled into small pieces. Others are properly manufactured but are poorly packaged. Containers should be made in such a way that they can be tightly closed after a few tablets have been removed. Tablets which dry out when exposed to the air should be put in glass tubes with cork stoppers.

Closures and packing and sealing procedures for supplies which are to be shipped should be standardized, and the standards should be obligatory for all galenical laboratories and pharmacies which supply pharmaceutical stations.

It would be of advantage to place all pharmaceutical stations under the direct supervision of the rayon pharmacy.

The pharmaceutical administrations supply kolkhoz medicine chests to tractor and agricultural brigades. From year to year the assortment of medicaments in these chests remained unchanged, and their arrangement became worse. Thus at the Vinnitsa Pharmaceutical Administration the medicaments and dressing materials are hastily and carelessly thrown into a poorly made, soft cardboard carton labeled "Kolkhoz Medicine Chest." In 1952 instead of including tincture of iodine in the chests, certain "innovators" replaced this item with glass ampules containing a mixture of iodine and potassium iodide crystals, and indicated how much water was to be added to make a usable solution. This was supposed to be a "prepared" medicinal for the use of the kolkhoz brigades under field conditions! The following year the chests were supplied with small bottles of a 5-percent solution of iodine, but even these were not satisfactory. In the majority of the chests the bottles were poorly capped, and the iodine leaked out all over the dressing materials and into some of the medicines.

The Main Pharmaceutical Administration should work out rules governing the assortment and packaging of the medicaments in the medicine chests. Above all there should be a sufficient reserve of dressing materials suitable for various purposes, i.e., different sized sterile compresses, cotton tampons, and bandages cut in 1.5 to 2 meter lengths. There should be antiseptic solutions of iodine or Brilliant Green in bottles of a capacity no larger than 5 ml with either glass or rubber stoppers. The therapeutic agents should include valerian drops, headache powders, stomach drops, and soda tablets. In addition there should be some anti-influenza remedies, particularly penicillin with ekmolin, medicine droppers, graduate cylinders for measuring volumes, thermometers, and a few ampules of spirits of ammonia. I would also recommend the inclusion of one of the new antibiotics such as synthomycin for use against intestinal diseases.

The Main Pharmaceutical Administration of the Ministry of Health USSR should have solved these pressing problems long ago.

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